

Romans 9:1-29: Can God Be Trusted?

Tommy Meador / General Adult

Romans / Romans 9:1–29

Introduction

- <https://news.gallup.com/poll/655106/americans-ratings-professions-stay-historically-low.aspx>
- Most trusted professions - Nurses rank 1. Grade school teachers rank 2. Trust of pastors has fallen dramatically (Only 27-32% of Americans rate pastors or clergy as having high honesty and ethical standards). So has trust of police officers. At the bottom of the list are lawyers, car salespeople, and members of congress.
- We have a hard time trusting others perhaps because we've been let down or betrayed. Or, to trust we have to open ourselves up to someone else knowing there's a possibility they may let us down.
- Not only do we have a hard time trusting others, but some of us have a hard time trusting God. Can we take Him at His Word? Can I really trust that He is good? That He will do what He has promised?
- [Romans 8](#) ends with assurance. God WILL turn our groaning and nothing will separate us from His love. [Romans 9](#) answers a serious question: Can God be trusted to keep His Word? Paul wants us to know that God's promises have not failed, and they will not fail.
- From this passage, I want to show you four truths to call you into deeper trust in God. This morning, I'm going to walk us through the text and make application at the end.

God keeps His promises even when it looks like He hasn't (vs. 1-13).

- Question Paul is answering: "What about the Jews? Didn't God make promises to them, that they were His people? Yet, now you're telling us that many Jews are not saved? Has God failed to keep His promise?"
- First, Paul is brokenhearted over the Jewish people. They're his kinsfolk. Perhaps he has specific people in mind when he writes these verses; family members and friends.
- HUGE STATEMENT: vs. 2-3: "I wish I were cursed and cut off from Christ for the benefit of my brothers and sisters..." Paul so broken hearted that he would give up his own salvation so that the people he loves could be saved (Not possible but that's he feels emotionally - Moses says something similar in [Exodus 32:32](#)).
- [Romans 9](#) is deeply theological, but it's also intensely personal for Paul. It should be personal for us as well. Our hearts should break for people that we know are far from God.
- vs. 4-5 - Paul reminds us that spiritual privilege does not equal salvation. Israel had much privilege, yet still missed Jesus as their Messiah. They rejected the One that the adoption, glory, covenants, law, temple service, and promises pointed to.
- Vs. 6 - BUT God's word has not failed. THIS is the hinge of the entire passage! Israel was God's chosen nation, but not all who belonged to ethnic Israel were the Israel of promise. God's saving promises were never based on mere ancestry but instead on His gracious calling.
- Paul gives two examples: First, not all of Abraham's descendants make up true Israel. God chose Isaac not Ishmael. Ishmael was a physical descendant of Abraham, but Isaac was the child of promise, not Ishmael. God chose that the child of promise would come through Sarah, not through Hagar.

- Second, Isaac, had two sons by his wife Rebekah: Jacob and Esau.
- vs. 11 - God chose to carry out His covenant purposes through Jacob, not Esau - not on the basis of Jacob or Esau being good or bad (they were both bad), but based on His electing purposes.
- vs. 13 - "I have hated Esau." NOT emotional but covenantal - Esau not chosen for God's redemptive covenant purposes.
- **God has never failed to keep His promises.** From our perspective, it may sometimes seem like God isn't at work or that He has not kept His promises, but that is never the case.
- **God is absolutely in control.** Paul not denying human responsibility, but He is arguing that God works out His plan using who He wants according to His will.

God's mercy is never unjust and His justice is always right (vs. 14-18).

- Paul knows how some might object: "Isn't it unjust for God to choose some and not others?"
- God's choosing is never based on performance. His election is an act of grace. If God were only just, and He gave NO grace, then everyone would be eternally damned.
- vs. 14-16 - Paul takes us back to [Exodus 32](#) when ethnic Israel rebelled against God. If God would have simply acted in justice, he would have wiped out His people. But, instead, He has mercy on those He desires to have mercy upon ([Exodus 33:19](#)). He spared a sinful nation. God is not BOUND to show mercy because we think we deserve it, but He chooses to show mercy and compassion to whom He desires for His own purposes.

- vs. 17-18 - Take the example of Pharaoh - whom at the same time God extended patience to as well as judgment.
- “I have raised you up...” Paul is not saying that God created Pharaoh as a morally neutral man and then forced Pharaoh to do evil.
- In Exodus, we’re told that Pharaoh hardened his heart towards God. God also hardened Pharaoh’s heart. God uses Pharaoh’s resistance to His will to accomplish His purpose. God does NOT harden a soft heart, but He will use even the hardest heart to show His glory. (Think [Romans 1:24](#)).
- God DID place Pharaoh in power. God sustained Pharaoh’s reign instead of immediately destroying him. God used Pharaoh’s already hard heart. God displayed His power and glory by saving His people in spite of the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart.
- **God can use whomever He wants to accomplish His purpose.** He can even use someone with a hardened heart to accomplish His purpose.
- **We are not writing the story.** We are not God. He’s writing the story, we are not. He’s not unjust. [Romans 9](#) is not calling us to accuse God but to trust God. God never owes mercy, but He delights to give it.

God carries out His purposes for His own glory; not our demands (vs. 19-29).

- Paul knows his audience might have yet another objection: “Who can resist God’s will? Isn’t human responsibility pointless if God chooses whom He desires? Can God really fault us?”
- vs. 20 - Paul’s answer: Who are you to talk back to God? (Think [Job 38-41](#) - “Where were you Job, when I created the universe?”)

- God is infinite, holy, and far above us. He's the powerful King of the universe. He invites us to ask our questions, but He does not answer to us. Nor, does He have to answer our questions.
- vs. 20-21 - God is the potter, we are the clay. The potter can choose to take a lump of clay and make it into whatever He desires. (Similar to [Jeremiah 18](#).)
- Pottery for honor = pottery for ceremonies, serving food, etc. Pottery for dishonor = pottery for storage, carrying waste, etc. The point: the potter gets to decide how each piece of pottery is used.
- The God of all creation gets to decide how He works in His creation. He gets to decide how He works in your life and in the lives of others.
- We all come from the same lump of clay - every person on the face of the planet is sinful and broken. No one starts morally superior. No one deserves honor by nature.
- God chooses how HE wants to work in the lives of people to accomplish His redemptive purposes.
- vs. 22 - a question, "If God wants to display His wrath by patiently enduring with objects of wrath and using them for His glory instead of immediately wiping them, isn't He right to do so?" Think of God's patience with Pharaoh. God did not destroy Pharaoh, but at every turn, when Pharaoh rebelled against God, God showed His glory.
- vs. 22 - prepared for destruction - passive voice - There's debate over what Paul means here - Did God prepare them for destruction or did they prepare themselves? E.g., God did not create Pharaoh simply to destroy him. Pharaoh willingly chose to rebel against God just like everyone else does. God did not choose to change Pharaoh's already evil heart.
- Paul is NOT saying that God creates innocent people (no one is innocent) to only destroy them or that God enjoys condemning people.

Paul IS saying that God is just to judge sin and God is extraordinarily patient with sinners.

- vs. 23, And, “Doesn’t God have the right to make His glory known on the objects that He chooses to show mercy on?” God doesn’t choose to pour out His wrath on everyone. [Romans 8:29-30](#) - before time began, God determined that He would set His mercy and compassion on those He chooses.
- vs. 25-26 - With the coming of the Messiah, God has made it abundantly clear that He has chosen to extend mercy and compassion not only on believing Jews but also believing Gentiles just as Hosea prophesied ([Hosea 2:23](#) and [Hosea 1:10](#)).
- Paul quotes [Isaiah 10:22-23](#). Isaiah prophesied that all of Israel would not be saved because God’s salvation is not contingent on ethnicity but faith in the Messiah.
- Paul quotes [Isaiah 1:9](#) - In God’s grace, He has spared a remnant of Israel when all of Israel deserved to be treated like Sodom and Gomorrah.
- **You need God to be at the center of the universe.** Paul is describing the kind of God we need. A God who is in control of everything and wants everyone part of creation to see how powerful, wise, and glorious He is.
- **You don’t need to be at the center of the universe.** We struggle with passages like [Romans 9](#) precisely because we want the universe to revolve around us and our limited perspective.

This passage is challenging because Paul is calling us to understand God’s plan from God’s perspective. How do we respond to this difficult passage?

- **Know that God’s choice matters, and so does yours.** In no way is Paul denying human responsibility. Salvation is a work of God, but you respond to that work by faith ([Romans 10](#)). You make a real choice to

follow Christ. BUT, in the mystery of God, there's a tension between predestination and human responsibility that we will never figure out.

GOSPEL: Today you can make a choice to respond to God's grace by believing that Jesus died and rose again for you. You can receive mercy and compassion as a free gift if you turn from your sins and turn to Jesus.

- **Let God be God.** This passage is not calling us to solve every theological mystery. This passage is calling us to trust our Father. You need to remember that you're the child, and God is our Father. Your Father doesn't need to tell you why He does everything that He does. He's wiser than you, and you have to trust that He knows what He's doing. Letting God be God means that because I trust that He knows what's best, I'm just going to do what He says because I really believe He knows what is best for me. Simple obedience is the right response to [Romans 9](#).
- **Be thankful that you did not receive what you deserved.** We're not entitled children, we're grateful children. [Romans 9](#) should humble us before God when we realize that we were objects of wrath yet God chose to make us objects of His mercy.
- **Be sorrowful for those who reject God.** We shouldn't think, "well, God didn't choose them, so my Gospel sharing doesn't matter." No, people willingly choose to rebel against God, and God chooses His church as the means by which the Gospel goes forward so that the eyes of the lost might be opened to the truth. Lostness should break our hearts and compel us to go.
- **Be serious about your worship.** If [Romans 9](#) shows us anything, it shows us that God should not be taken lightly. How often do we take Him lightly? How often do we trifle the things of God? His glory is serious, and the way we live our lives before God should reflect that we understand who our God is. He is not to be taken lightly.

- This morning, if not a follower of Jesus, give your life to Him. If a follower of Jesus, determine to live in light of the mercy and compassion you have received.